Allegretto.

GERTRVDE HALL

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ALLEGRETTO

Brown, Mrs. Gertrude (Hall)

Allegretto

By
Gertrude Hall.

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OLIVER HERFORD

Boston
Roberts Brothers
1894

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F m c V Oct 20/33

To Wolcott Balestier

These Verses and Pictures

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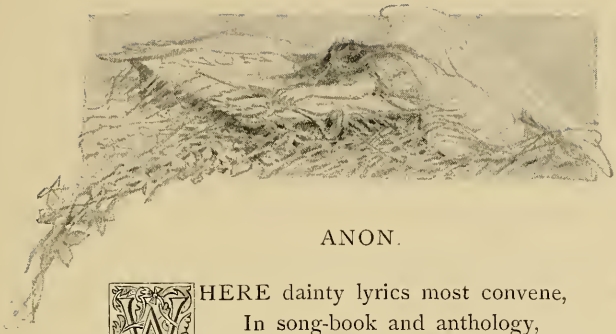
ALLEGRETTO



ANON.

WHERE dainty lyrics most convene,
In song-book and anthology,
'Neath verses of deserts not mean
His simple name I often see;
But ne'er in text-book, manual, note,
The slightest mention of this bard,
Whom yet with credit one may quote, —
Poor Mr. Anon, I think it hard!

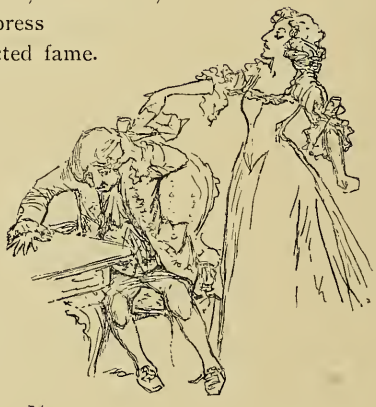
For he, too, sang the faithful breast
That 's better than a starry eye;
Sang love and springtime with the best,
And cherry lips that none might buy;
With Sydney, Suckling, Herrick, Vere,
His place among the "standards" won,
And now that name is all we hear
Of all he was, — poor Mr. Anon!

Where did he live? What did he do
But launch his fancies in the air?
And was his hair worn in a cue,
Or loose in love-locks, brown or fair?

No doubt he had dreams of his own —
    Light may the earth upon them lie!
Strange that so little should be known
    Of one who died — When did he die?

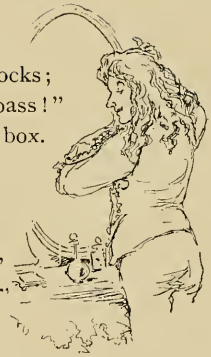
What may his *petit nom* have been,
    Poor All-forgotten, long ago?
How did his mother call him in
    From play at bed-time? Might one know!
What did his love put after "Dear"
    In her love-letter, when she wrote?
What did his wife, with voice severe,
    Say when she found the blushing note?

Charles! Edward! William! Peter! Paul!
    Or was it James? or was it John?
The fact is, no one knows at all —
    Alack-a-day! Poor Mr. Anon!
Thus I beguile mine idleness
    While staring at his odd, brief name;
I think of writing to the press
    On this case of neglected fame.

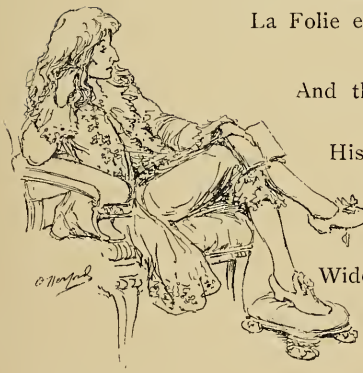


Young La Folie.

OUNG La Folie is at his looking-glass,
Arranging his blond hair in lustrous locks;
He of the careless shrug, the gay "Let pass!"
Perfumes his lips from a rare ointment box.



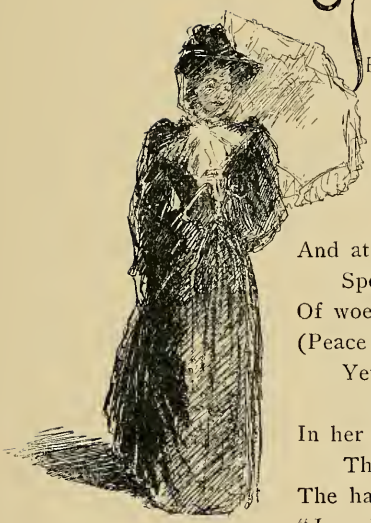
And La Sagesse, his Mentor, seeing him
So butterfly as never once before:
"Wherefore these vanities, this gaudy trim?"
La Folie echoes dreamily, "Wherefore?"



And then, with soft expense of breath,
"Marie!"
His grave friend's eyes, so much on parchment bent
The budding rose they mostly miss to see,
Widen somewhat at this development.

"But she is far." "And yet so fine I dress
For her, — yea, just because *there is* Marie!"
"But she will never know," says La Sagesse
"And you speak true, — alas!" says La Folie.

"And so," sums Wisdom, "so, of all my toil
And teaching, thankless youth, the end is this!"
And Folly, worlds of pity in his smile,
"You dear old muff, you don't know what love is!"



MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

THE time is come to speak, I think:
For on the square I met
My beauteous widow, fresh and pink,
Her black gown touched at every brink
With tender violet;

And at her throat the white *crêpe lisse*
Spoke in a fluffy bow
Of woe that should perhaps ne'er cease—
(Peace to thy shade, Golightly, peace!)
Yet mitigated woe.

In her soft eye, that used to scan
The ground, nor seem to see,
The hazel legend sweetly ran,
"I *could* not wholly hate a man
For quite adoring me."

And when she drew her 'kerchief fine,
    A hint of heliotrope
Its snow edged with an inky line
Exhaled, — from which scent you divine
    Through old regrets new hope.

And then her step, so soft and slow
    She scarcely seemed to lift
From off the sward her widowed toe, —
One year, one little year ago! —
    So soft yet, yet so swift;

Then, too, her blush, her side glance coy,
    Tell me in easy Greek
(I wonder could her little boy
Prove source of serious annoy?)
    The time has come to speak.

RIVALS.

MY only loves! The first is fair,
One of those blondes who best may wear
That palest rose;
The other 's dark, — nay, almost black, —
Displays of hair an utter lack,
And needs no clo'es:
My pipe, the latter; and the first,
Miss Phyllida de Crickelhurst.

I love them both — do not I, then!
When Phyllida comes on the scene,
My pulses move
From dead-march step to polka pace;
But when I 'm left just face to face
With the other love,
I own to a contentment rare
I scarcely feel when Phyll is there.

Yet Phyllida is — oh, so sweet!
That she should just live is a treat.
Dear wayward dove,
Her one fault is, *perhaps*, her wit. —
She plagues me oft a pretty bit!
That other love
Has this one virtue over Phyll,
A mind to do just what I will.

Suppose I have a fit of "blues,"
And comfort crave, does she refuse?
Or laugh at me?
She 's always *there*, she may not *stir*:
If Phyllida were more like her,
What life might be!
Or if it were the other way,
And she were more like Phyllida!

Still, if it should come to a choice,
And I could not but give my voice
As to which love
When skies are dark and winds blow free
Should stay to bear me company
Beside my stove,
I know full well what I should do,
And so I think do you — don't you?

A New World.

WHEN I grow weary of Wisdom and old Things,
On Fancy's wings

I fly to a new world, as it should be
Made by me.

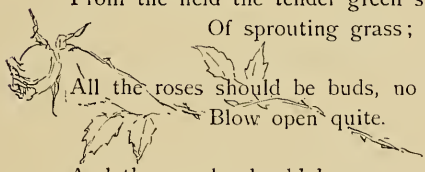
There the mountains all should be just little hills,
The rivers, rills;

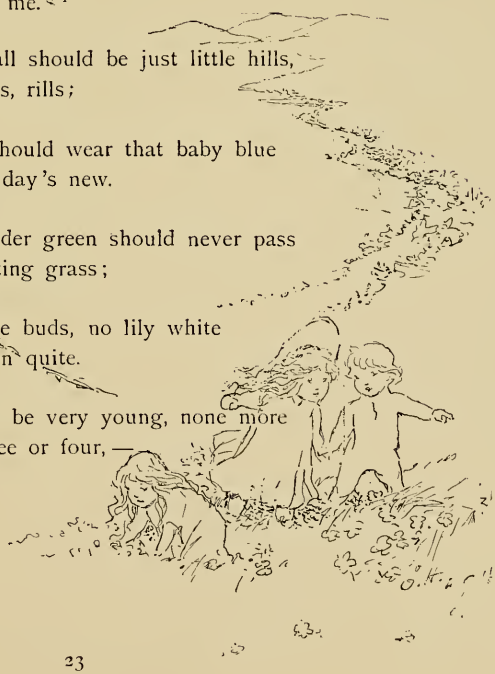
And the sky all day should wear that baby blue
Of when day's new.

From the field the tender green should never pass
Of sprouting grass;

All the roses should be buds, no lily white
Blow open quite.

And the people should be very young, none more
Than three or four, —





The age of cupids; sweetly they should play
The livelong day

In the youngling grass, where all the ewes and rams
Were little lambs;

By the reedy water-courses, where the frogs
Were polliwogs,

And the reeds themselves were — oh, no, not cat-tails.
But kitten-tails;

And on the banks not lady-slipper grew,
But baby-shoe;

And in the barnyards, calves could barely play,
So new were they;

And chicks still wore the yellow of their eggs
On bills and legs.

In every nest at eve a callow brood
Huddle should;

And when the crescent brightened in the dark,
Puppies bark.

FRIENDS.

WE 'RE friends; what makes you think
we 're not?
We get along first-rate.
You don't go 'n think just coz we 've
got
Nose-bleeds when we separate
We are n't best friends, are n't Tom
and I?
Why, don't you see, Ma, *that's just
why!*

When Tom and I meet after school,
" 'll you play leap-frog?" says I.
He answers, casual-like and cool,
"Girl's game! Let 's play 'I
spy.' "
Says I, "Pish! Good for little fry!
Marbles?" says I. Says he, "Not I!"

Says he, "Play jack-straws?—I 've brought mine."
Says I, "Run home ter Poll,
And make her slick yer hair down fine,
And give yer yer rag-doll;
We 'll drag her 'long in yer sweet go-cart."
Says Tommy promptly, "Ain't you smart!"

Says I, " 'll you play ball? — got my bat."
  'S he, " Go to yer grandmother! "
'S I, " Don't you speak to me like that! "
  'S he, " What if I should pre — fer? "
'S I, " You best mind " — 'S he, " Don't you fret! "
'S I, " 'll you fight me? " 'S he, " Jus' you bet! "

And then we fight. And when we 've done,
  Our eyes are sometimes black,
And all our buttons mostly gone, —
  He punches, I punch back;
And when we 're tired out, we drop;
And when we 've had enough, we stop.

But I like Tommy, he likes me;
  There is n't another chap
Will fight so long or readily —
  Quick, mother! where 's my cap?
That whistle 's Tom — where *was* it laid?
Ah, good! *He sha'n't think I 'm afraid!*

One of the Flock

IN all the church she wore the prettiest bonnet;
It had a rose, a gold-green fly upon it,
And wondrously became.
All through the hymns her voice soared o'er the others;
And now they tell me, many anxious mothers,
That she is much to blame.

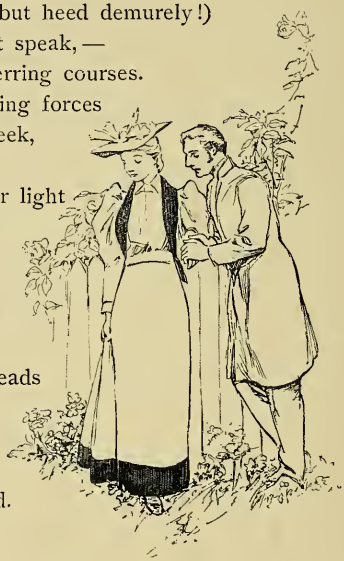
Yes, yes; no doubt. 'T is surely unbefitting
To make all eyes refer to where you 're sitting
Or standing up at praise.
There 's something radically wrong, one fancies,
About a maid the congregation's glances
Follow in all her ways.

Yes, yes; no doubt. I feel it is my duty
To wrestle with this proud, unbroken beauty:
But here 's the rub, — ay, here:
When I would speak the crushing accusation, —
I can't account for 't, — my articulation
Grows anything but clear.

She turns on me her brown eyes, sweet and laughing,
And so my sermon ends in — almost chaffing.
To lecture would seem vain
When radiant smiles her teasing teeth reveal all —
Indeed, when she smiles pleasantly, I feel all —
Ah, how shall I explain!

Yet right is right, and wrong is wrong; and surely
(How easy 't were, would she but heed demurely!)
This same day I must speak, —
Remonstrate with her o'er her erring courses.
But as I fear the foe's confusing forces
Of dimples in the cheek,

I 'll seek her when the summer light
is failing;
We 'll lean together o'er the
garden railing,
While by cool breezes
fanned
The dewy roses shake their heads
and shiver, —
And in the perfumed dusk I
will deliver
My pastoral reprimand.



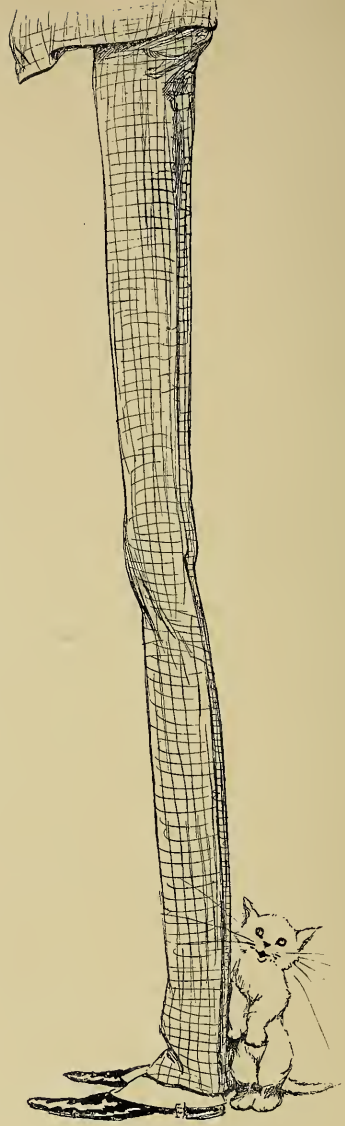
A KITTEN.

A KITTEN small sat in a fluffy heap
Regarding a young man
Whose study of his upper lip was deep;
Thus her reflections ran:

"That slim young man who stands before the glass
In his white sleeves, and thinks, —
Now o'er his face bright gleams of pleasure pass,
Again his spirit sinks.

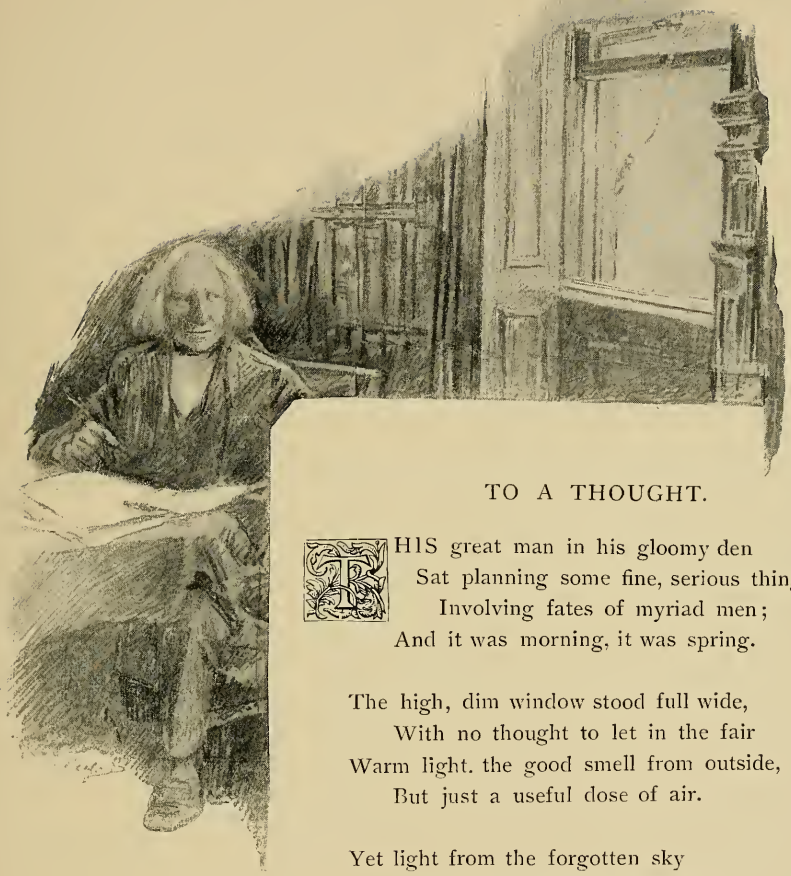
"I know what ails him, — I, the little cat
Born just the other day, —
And I smile at him from his best silk hat
In a superior way.

" For
I 'm
so
little
't would
take
several
To
make
a
man,
e'en
slim,



And he 's so big a hundred kittens small
Could be made out of him;

"But yet I think he will have suffered much
Ere *his* are fierce and fine
As mine, and long and silken to the touch, —
And I was born with mine!"



TO A THOUGHT.

THIS great man in his gloomy den
Sat planning some fine, serious thing,
Involving fates of myriad men;
And it was morning, it was spring.

The high, dim window stood full wide,
With no thought to let in the fair
Warm light. the good smell from outside,
But just a useful dose of air.

Yet light from the forgotten sky
Came in, and smells of roses, too.
And presently a butterfly. —
A yellow one, just flecked with blue.

The great man's quill paused in the air;
    He looked up with a cold gray eye;
What guest intrusive had he there?
    Dear him! a yellow butterfly.

A butterfly; yes, such things were
    Outside, he knew, — out of his line!
Of painted wings, still, what a pair!
    For such a lady's waist, so fine!

"But flee, you sunny stranger, flee!
    Parade elsewhere your golden grace;
For this will never do for me,"
    He said, and drove his quill apace.

And, as the bright thing would not go,
    The poor stern great man by and by
Took one large volume from a row
    And placed it on the butterfly.

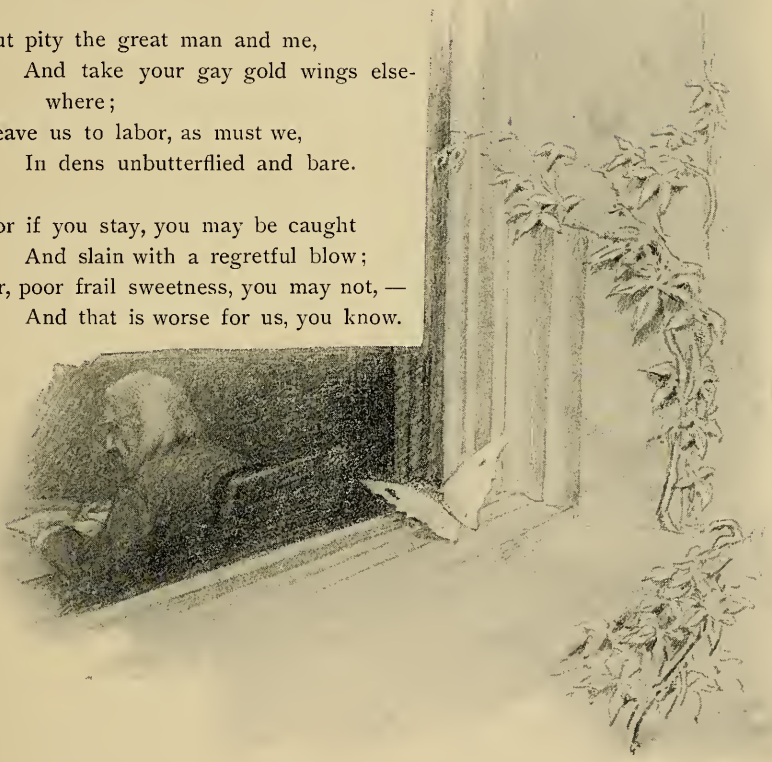
My meaning is, I think, quite clear,
    You little, gentle, tender thing,
Useless, adorable, fine, dear,
    You sweet, sweet thought to whom I sing!

The great man in this case am I,
    What silk so e'er my steel nerve mask;
And you 're the noxious butterfly
    That lures my cold eyes from their task.

And, for you are so dear, so bright,
    And, for we love you, you must flee;
If you preferred to stay, you might,
    If that were not so, — can't you see?

But pity the great man and me,
    And take your gay gold wings elsewhere;
Leave us to labor, as must we,
    In dens unbutterflied and bare.

For if you stay, you may be caught
    And slain with a regretful blow;
Or, poor frail sweetness, you may not, —
    And that is worse for us, you know.



SHADOWS.

MISTRESS CAROLINE and I,
Carolus,
When June glorifies the sky,
Go on formal walks together,
And exhaustively the weather
We discuss.

With her barriers of reserve
(*Chevaux-de-frise!*)
And disdain in every curve
Of her profile sweet and cold,
She might well a far more bold
Rob of ease.

So I turn me from the fair
Cold-and-sweet,
And divert my dark despair
Watching two wise, happy shadows
Stealing softly through the meadows
At our feet.

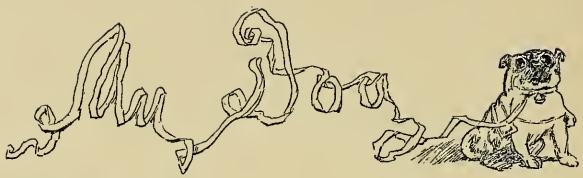
When I drop a pace behind
    (Shine, sun, shine!)
Who dares say she is unkind?
See her graceful shadow gliding,
Friendly, sociable, confiding,
    Close to mine!

In truth, her deportment 's stiff
    And defiant;
But that form in sweet relief
On the sunlit grassy ground,
When there comes a little mound, —
    See, how pliant!

In flesh she 's majestical
    More than wish,
Goddess — yea, though china fall!
But in shadow on the grass there,
Trembling, flustered, see her pass there, —
    Womanish.

Now her hat-strings brush my ear;
    Now one tress
Floats so near, so near, so near —
Now the gallant shadow there
Is going to kiss that shadow hair,
    As I guess.

No! The sun in sudden rack
    Cools his flame;
And she says, "Let us go back."
So we saunter home together,
Chatting calmly of the weather,
    As we came.



IS face is such as cannot fail
To please, though of a type not rare;
And his tail
Has such an element of grace
It bears out well the promise fair
Of his face.

A satin-sleek, loose-fitting skin;
Five sooty *mouches*, two on each cheek,
One on his chin:
Five lines, conveying pained surprise
At ways of men, his brow do streak
Between the eyes.

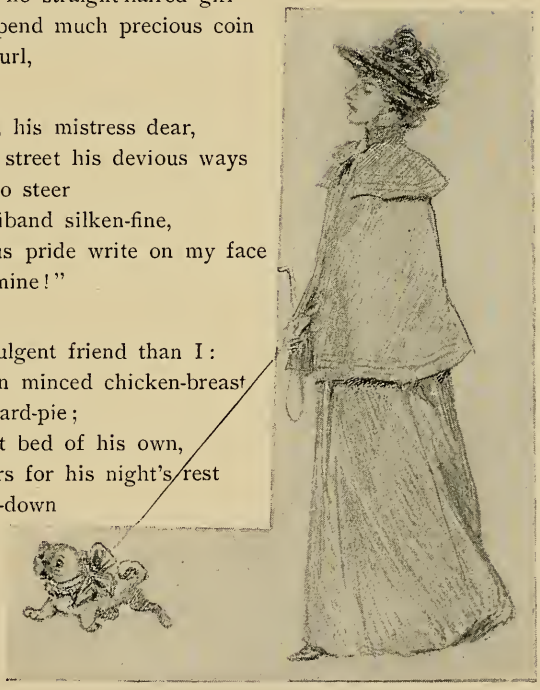
His eyes, then, have a puzzled way,
As though a wayworn foreign chap
From far away
Should beg in language no one knows
A bread-crust, and some wag mayhap
Give him a rose.

His nose, a sensitive, neat pug,
Relieves with humorous upward knack
His solemn mug;
One curious tooth of ivorie
Projects across a lip as black
As may well be.

With valued points so well endowed,—
So broad of back, so slim of loin,
Of leg so bowed,
Of tail so as no straight-haired girl
But would expend much precious coin
For its curl,

He is, that I, his mistress dear,
When in the street his devious ways
I strive to steer
With azure riband silken-fine,
Feel conscious pride write on my face
"He is mine!"

No more indulgent friend than I:
I feed him on minced chicken-breast
And custard-pie;
He has a soft bed of his own,
Yet oft prefers for his night's rest
My eider-down

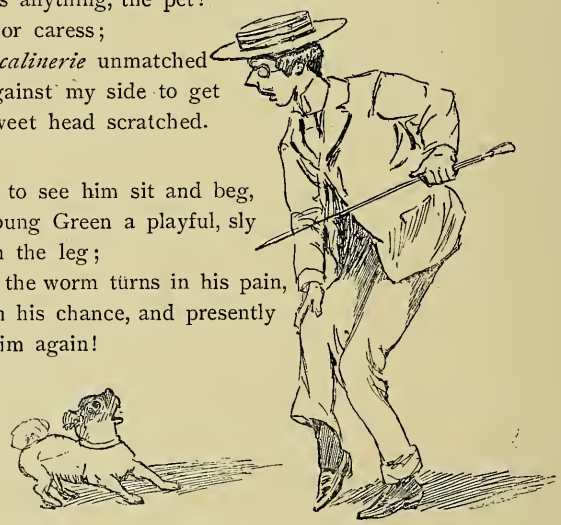


A blanket snug against the cold
He wears; and all his steps I know
From bell of gold,
Whether his leisure he employ
Worrying the maid above, — below,
Worrying the boy.

How he is past conception sweet!
How, when a foe comes, in my arms
He seeks retreat!
With what zest he destroys my hats!
How he barks out his wild alarms
When I say, "Cats!"

You ought to see him paw my dress,
If he wants anything, the pet!
Scrap or caress;
With soft *calinerie* unmatched
Rub up against my side to get
His sweet head scratched.

You ought to see him sit and beg,
Or give young Green a playful, sly
Nip in the leg;
And when the worm turns in his pain,
Flee, watch his chance, and presently
Nip him again!



I 've heard him called a pampered brute:
The coward charge (preposterous quite!)
    I could refute
With utmost ease, if so I chose;
But that the world is full of spite
    Every one knows.

UNE PARISIENNE.

MITTENED hands thrust in his pockets,
Fur cap drawn down to his eyes,
Mild orbs starting from their sockets
In a trance of pleased surprise, —

At the window he stands rooted,
Gazing at her through the glass,
Getting cold and colder-footed
As the unheeded minutes pass.

Is not she a dainty vision!
    All one faultless baby-pink,
Gold hair dressed in style Parisian,
    Eyebrows black as India ink.

Eyes *perhaps* a little starey,
    But of such a charming blue!
Lips most like a double cherry,
    Freshly glossed with morning dew!

On her breast a red rose smoulders
    In a cloud of smoke-like lace
Veiling just the perfect shoulders
    One would argue from her face.

Now she fronts us, softly eyeing
    The young bumpkin gratified;
Then — one fancies she is sighing —
    Turns a little to one side.

Then in one long glance assembles
    All she may not care to say,
Then, her steadfast blue gaze trembles,
    Then, her face is turned away!

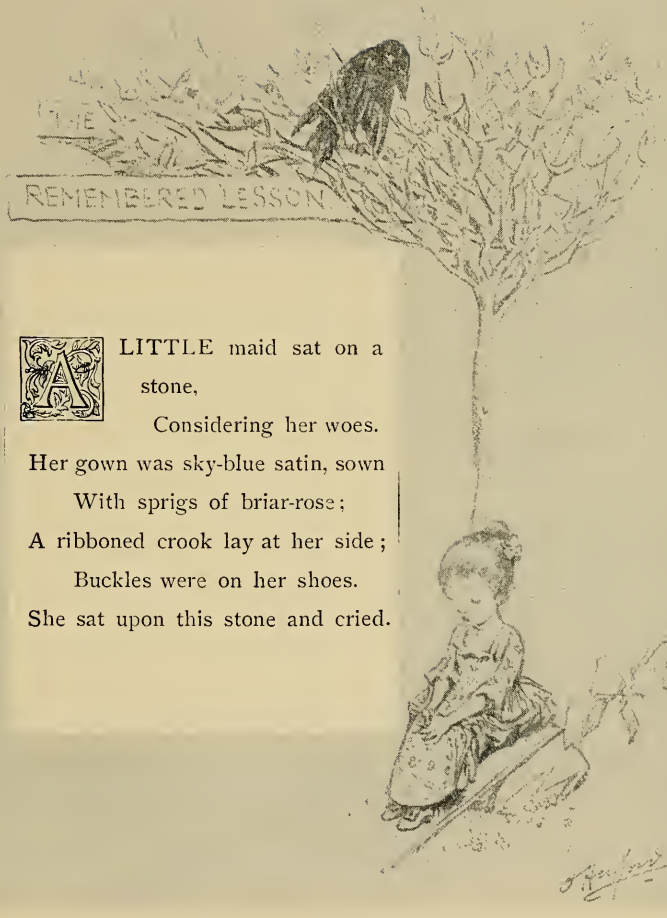
And in place of it — oh, fluffy
    Triumph of the barber's art!
Curls so curly, puffs so puffy,
    Each must cost a man his heart.

Sighs her simple country capture,
    And remembers he must go;
When, behold! upon his rapture
    Dawns the soft lost profile, slow.

Now one eye is on him bearing,
    As the puffs and curls grow less;
Now both great sweet eyes are staring
    With an unchanged tenderness.

And he basks in it, forgetting
    Why he came to town today, —
But one eye again is setting,
    Now the other fades away.

Then he minds him of his duty,
    Tears his fettered fancy free,
Walks off, murmuring, "Oh Beauty —
    What a searching air this be!"



THE REMEMBERED LESSON

A LITTLE maid sat on a stone,
Considering her woes.
Her gown was sky-blue satin, sown
With sprigs of briar-rose;
A ribboned crook lay at her side;
Buckles were on her shoes.
She sat upon this stone and cried.

Before her lay green meads; behind,
    A little tree did rise,
Whose April tufts put one in mind
    Of giant butterflies, —
Fantastic swarm, green-winged, absurd,
    There fluttering, leaf-wise;
Upon this tree was a large bird.

The poor child, sitting there alone,
    Made herself evil cheer;
The world seemed colder than the stone;
    A frequent little tear
Her golden lashes overran.
    Now she looked up: quite near
There stood a nice old gentleman.

He wore a neat three-cornered hat,
    A plum-colored waistcoat,
Whose fob protruded with his fat
    Gold watch; below his throat
A handsome fall of snuffy lace;
    But worthiest of note
Was still his kind, sagacious face.

He turned his deep-lit, knowing eyes
    Upon the little maid,
Who paused a moment in her sighs.
    "What ails you, dear?" he said.
She stared up where he smiled at her,
    Then sniffed, "My sheep have strayed;
I don't know where to find 'em, sir."

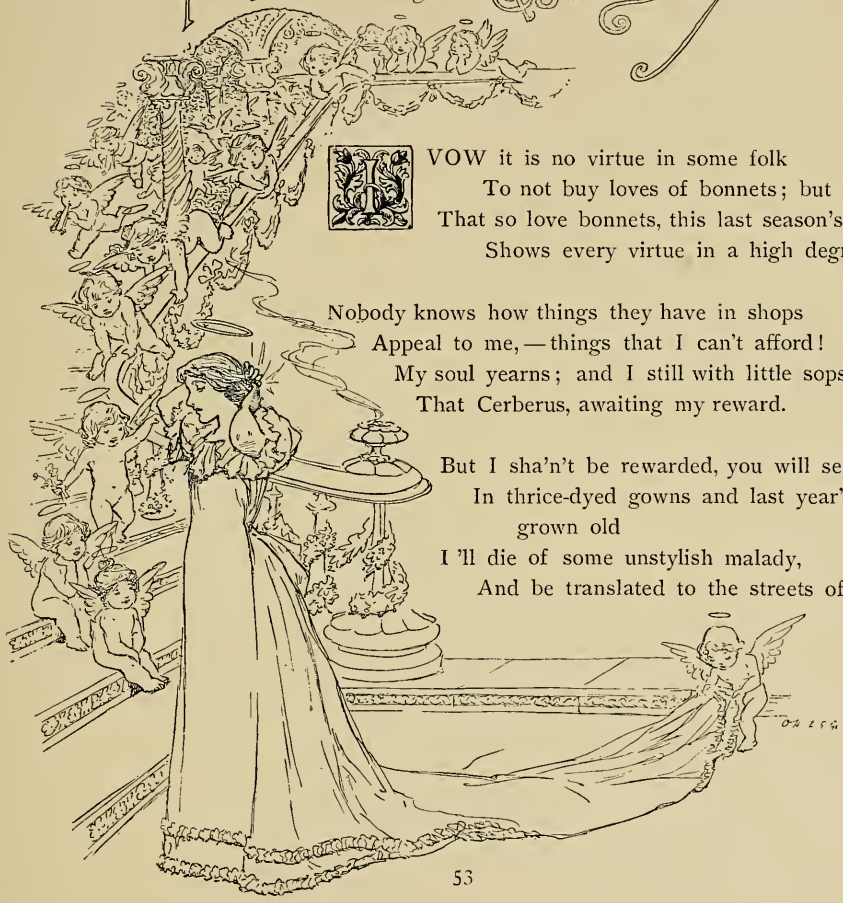
The old man sat down by her crook,
    Upon another stone,
Cheered her, and comfortingly took
    Her small hand in his own.
"For sheep see fit to stray, you cry?
    Just leave those sheep alone.
Leave 'em alone," he said, "say I!

"Just let 'em stray and stray and stray;
    They 'll tire of wandering.
You lie beneath this tree all day,
    Enjoy yourself, pipe, sing;
They 'll all come home ere night, you 'll see,
    As meek as lambs, and bring
Their tails just where they ought to be."

I think I must have been the bird
    Above, for still I seem
That precious lesson to have heard
    From Time's lips, in a dream;
And when my sheep stray, — not real sheep
    With wool, as you may deem,
(I can't have been myself Bo-Peep!)

Not woolly sheep, but things, I mean,
    That likewise go wrong, roam, —
In vain regrets I waste no spleen,
    But toss off care as foam:
I live as if in joyful case,
    And duly they come home
With figurative tails in place.

Poor Little Miss Flighty.



I VOW it is no virtue in some folk
To not buy loves of bonnets; but in me,
That so love bonnets, this last season's *toque*
Shows every virtue in a high degree.

Nobody knows how things they have in shops
Appeal to me, — things that I can't afford!
My soul yearns; and I still with little sops
That Cerberus, awaiting my reward.

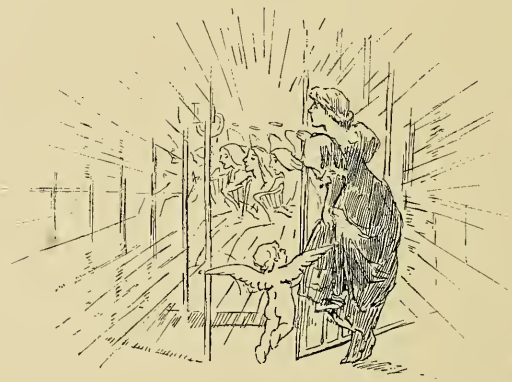
But I sha'n't be rewarded, you will see;
In thrice-dyed gowns and last year's hats grown old
I 'll die of some unstylish malady,
And be translated to the streets of gold.

And there the harp, the palm! No hats at all —
Haloes! No doubt my soul is not so shut
To good but I too feel the higher call
At times, and hope for Paradise; but — but —

If, for example, there might be a kind
Of ante-chamber to the Heavenly Hall,
Where I might stay a little, and there find
The things I longed for on this earthly ball!

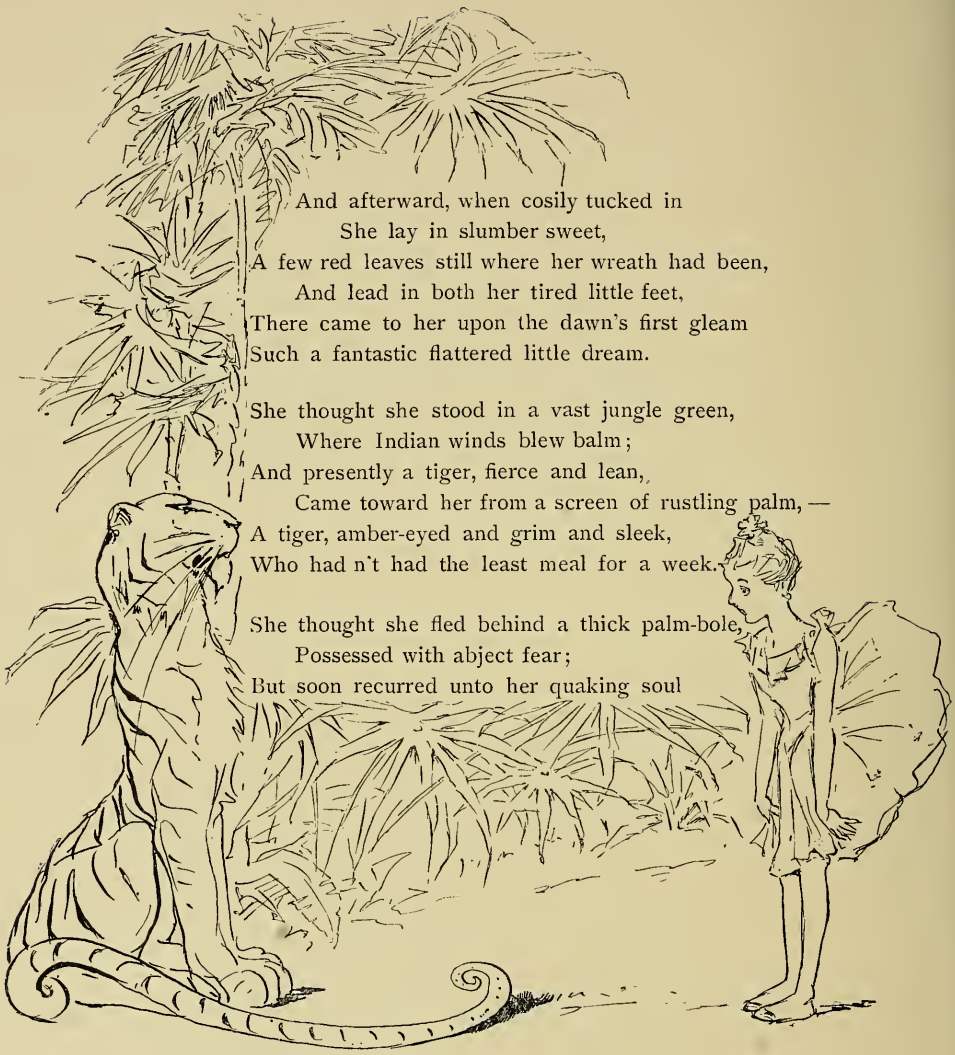
Know for a moment how it feels to own
A seal-skin sacque, real pearls, fans, bangles, rings,
A silver coffee-set that 's not a loan,
And perfumes and silk gowns, and all such things!

Then, ushered in where cherubim sing praise,
I 'd don without a murmur my white stole,
And be an angel my eternal days —
Ah, God forgive my worldly little soul!



Her Dream.

"MY little love," he murmured in her ear,
When her *pas seul* was danced,
And she came tripping 'mid an echoing cheer
Behind the scenes, flushed, smiling and entranced,
"My little dove, such loveliness, such charm,
Such grace, a very tiger might disarm!"



And afterward, when cosily tucked in
She lay in slumber sweet,
A few red leaves still where her wreath had been,
And lead in both her tired little feet,
There came to her upon the dawn's first gleam
Such a fantastic flattered little dream.

She thought she stood in a vast jungle green,
Where Indian winds blew balm;
And presently a tiger, fierce and lean,
Came toward her from a screen of rustling palm, —
A tiger, amber-eyed and grim and sleek,
Who had n't had the least meal for a week.

She thought she fled behind a thick palm-bole,
Possessed with abject fear;
But soon recurred unto her quaking soul

The words some one had murmured in her ear,
And straightway she advanced with easy grace,
And smiled right in the tiger's glowering face.

The tiger, taken much aback, made pause,
And eyed with glances cold
Her slim shape in its skirts of pinky gauze,
Airy and crisp and spangled o'er with gold;
He eyed her downward from her hair's red rose,
Then upward from her satin-slippered toes.

Now she spread out her round white arms like wings,
And rose upon the tips
Of those enchanting satin-slippered things,
A breathless smile upon her parted lips;
She moved along with tiny hurried hops —
The tiger sat square down and licked his chops.

Then, with the languor of who condescends,
She glided where he sat,
So near she brushed his savage whisker-ends,
And daintily performed an *entrechat;*
And with an unconcern that made him stare
Stood five full minutes one foot in the air.

She pursed her lips in her most winning way,
And blew him a light kiss.
The brute looked as a tiger who should say,
"Whoe'er heard of so rich a jest as this!"
His yellow eyes with admiration warmed, —
And so, the dream ran, so he was disarmed.

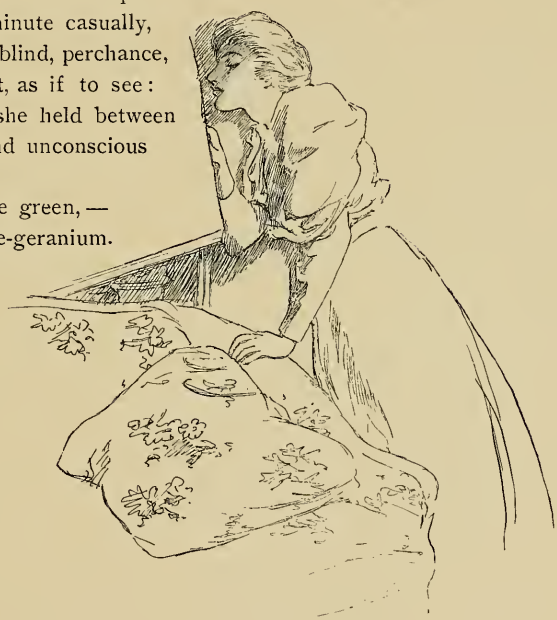
Blind-man's Buff.

THE farmer had five buxom girls, —
Joan, Betty, Hester, Peg, and Kate;
And all had blushes, dimples, curls,
Had dewy lips and noses straight.
And four, in truth, were not sedate,
But Kate was quiet as a mouse, —
And I loved Kate,
And I dwelt in her father's house.

And when at evening work was o'er,
The girls and we, the farmer boys,
Would clear the great worn kitchen floor
For games and dances, rounds and noise;
And when none knew what more to play,
Each pastime having served enough,
I 'd shyly say,
"Let 's have a game of blind-man's-buff!"

Then, while all minds were occupied
With searching for that 'kerchief red
Of size sufficient to be tied
About the boyish bullet head,
Kate, with one finger on her lips,
Her long, moist eyes on mine that glowed,
Would stilly slip
From out the busy, laughing crowd,

And spend among the window-plants
One careless minute casually,
Lifting the window-blind, perchance,
And gazing out, as if to see:
Returning whence, she held between
Slim fingers and unconscious thumb
A trifle green, —
A sprig of rose-geranium.



That, when the game began at last
(She 'd teased it till her fingers smelt),
With ease and swiftness she 'd make fast
Between her panting heart and belt;
And when my turn came to be blind,
Fate must have slyer been than Fate,
But I could find
My little rose-geranium Kate.

Oh, happy groping in the dark
Through fifteen thicknesses of red!
I 'd stop and make believe to hark,
When I would sniff the air instead.
And at my sleeve fair Peg would pluck,
And Joan into my arms would burst;
But no, I 'd duck, —
She must smell of geranium first!

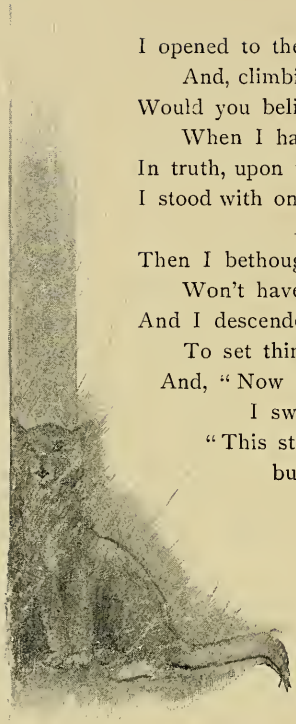
Oh, pleasure! blindly following
That fleeting perfume, haunting, fine!
And when I 'd caught the sweet, scared thing, —
Mine, for one little moment mine, —
Oh, bliss! for I might kiss her cheek,
As was the custom at that date.
She 's not so meek
As she was then, now; are you, Kate?

THOSE STAIRS.

IN going up to bed last night
I climbed with little care,
And when I thought I 'd done the flight,
There still was one more stair;
'T was late, the lights were out, and so
Most grievously I stubbed my toe.

And as I lingered, rubbing hard,
There came a plaintive noise
Uplifted from the lone back yard.
Said I, "I know the voice;
It 's Tom. Excluded hath he been;
Bad night; I 'll let the poor beast in."

Descending to admit the cat
At the dark kitchen door,
I thought when I had reached the mat
That there was one stair more;
My progress the dull floor did block, —
My nervous system got a shock.



I opened to the doleful crier,
And, climbing back to bed,
Would you believe? strove to get higher,
When I had reached the head;
In truth, upon the topmost stair
I stood with one foot in the air.

Then I bethought me, "Mrs. B——
Won't have the cat in nights!"
And I descended speedily
To set things back to rights.
And, "Now I 'm safe,"
I sweetly thought;
"This step 's the last—"
but it was not!

FROM ÆSOP.

I

SLY puss (literally puss)
Once did so well with pensive purr
And great eyes softly sulphurous
A fond wretch fell in love with her.

And (this was years and years ago),
With Pygmalionic fancy stirred,
Prayed that she might be changed into
A woman; and his prayer was heard.

At waving of some magic wand
    Her snowy whiskers disappeared,
Her narrowing lips grew pink and fond,
    Her fine ears shrank, her temples cleared;

Her eyes assumed a gentler tint,
    Yet kept their waxing-waning ways;
In her hushed step survived a hint
    Of velvet-footed feline days.

The pensive purr she still retained,
    And ofttimes arched her graceful throat
As if to sleek her tender-grained
    Skin, as of old her furry coat.

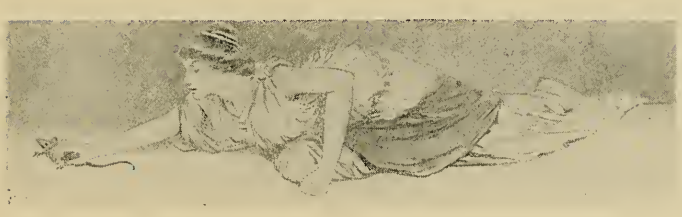
She made, indeed, in her new plight,
    Curling on the familiar mat,
As sweet a pussy-woman quite
    As she had been a pussy-cat.

The man praised all the powers above;
    Nor did the days bring as they flew
The least abatement in his love
    For his fastidious, tender *Mu*.

Until (ah, so it still hath been:
    Your pleasure scarcely well begun,
Some little part of speech steps in,
    If! — *But!* — *Until!* — and spoils the fun)

One day before the ingle flame
She lay in a luxurious drowse;
A tiny sound of scrambling came;
The husband cried, "It is a mouse!"

And then — a veil we will drop o'er
The wretched man's dismay and shame
To see his fair one, on all four,
In hot pursuit of her old game.



II.

SLEEK dog met a wolf once, long ago,
So shabby, oh, so shabby! His rough coat
About his hollow ribs appeared to float,
Rather than any other verb I know.

And he was weary, soiled with dust and mire;
One ear was patched, the other ear was rent;
And in his eye a deep discouragement
Had deadened quite its ordinary fire.

His glance betrayed the sadness and the doubt
Of one who has to look far in the past
To verify how long since he dined last,
And wonders how much longer he 'll hold out.

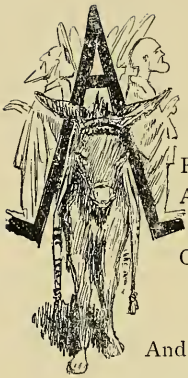
The dog was moved to pity, seeing him.
"Come home with me, Wolf," quoth he, civilly;
"Live with us dogs a while, and do as we;
You soon will be as plump as you are slim.

"This life you wolves lead can't be very gay.
Snatched joys I know are misreported sweet;
And then when you don't pay for what you eat,
You know there always *is* the deuce to pay.

"Now we have marrow-bones and chicken-wings —"
A flame leapt in the wolf's reviving eye:
"I 'm coming!" As they hastened, "By the by,"
He said, "what must one *do* for all those things?"

"Oh, serve a little, fawn on a few hands —"
The wolf slacked speed as one who meets a check;
And now he spied a mark on the dog's neck.
"What 's that?" "That? oh, my chain! Custom demands —"

"They chain you up?" "Sometimes." The wolf stood still, —
The shabby, hungry wolf. "It cannot be,"
He said. "You know, I don't mind starving, free,
But I object, Dog, on slave's fare to fill."



III.

A CERTAIN ass, distinguished in his set
For extra length of ear and force of lung,
At fortune s hands with strange preferment
met:
O'er his plain coat a sumptuous pall was
flung,

And thereon set, all brave with various paint,
The images of many a good apostle,
Pale martyr, pious maiden, haloed saint.
Seeing his common step must make them jostle

In a way ('mong saints!) quite without precedent,
'T was fit he practised majesty of gait;
So with his burden through the streets he went
With pace severe indeed, and moderate.

And at his passing, — lo! "What novel freak
Possesses," thought this ass, "the mind of man?
He bowed to me before not once a week,
And now he bows and scrapes whene'er he can."

He was not long accounting for the change,
    However, having once begun to try;
For in himself full many a virtue strange
    Became apparent to his sharpened eye.

He smiled a slow, becoming, flattered smile:
    "At last I am beginning to be prized;
My merits, charms, and gifts, ignored erewhile,
    I thank my stars, of late are recognized."

So passed he, pompous, through the reverent crowd;
    And when his pent-up joy at last found way
In strains of exultation long and loud,
    The mild saints smiled a little, I dare say.

Fuzzidora.

THAT was my rag-doll, long ago.
Poor little strange rag-dear!
Her eyes were beads, her hair was tow,
Her outlines slightly queer.

And yet upon my childish heart
All day I squeezed her tight,
And, finding it too hard to part,
Took her to bed at night.

She might be there still, on some shelf,
Spending her good old age,
In one tucked frock I made myself
From grandma's green barege,

But that I had a brother, too,
My Ben — you don't know Ben?
He 's in the Guards now, Seventh, Blue;
He wore short jackets then.

He was my hero and my king
In Fuzzidora's day;
I 'd not have doubted *any*thing
That he might choose to say.

Said he (I think I see him yet,
In boyish corduroys,
With auburn hair that curled when wet,
The gloriousest of boys),

"Come, Midget, fly about," he said,
"And fetch your rag-doll out!
We 'll plant her in the cabbage-bed,
And so perhaps she 'll sprout.

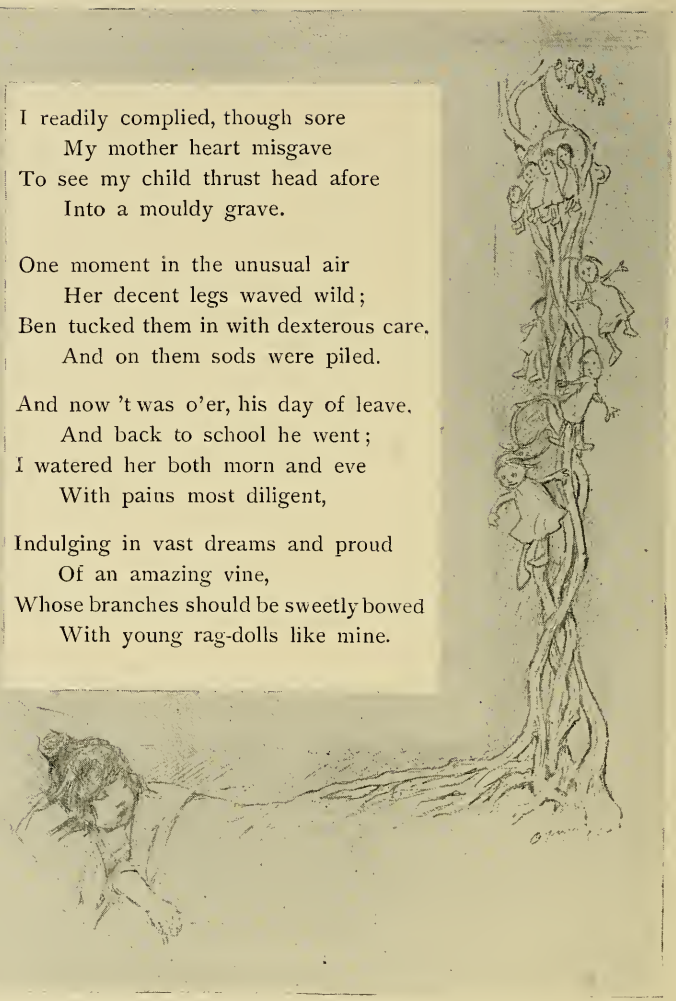
"And then who knows, instead of one,
But you may have ten dolls
Just like her, handsomer than fun,
With fuzzy, flaxen polls!"

I readily complied, though sore
My mother heart misgave
To see my child thrust head afore
Into a mouldy grave.

One moment in the unusual air
Her decent legs waved wild;
Ben tucked them in with dexterous care,
And on them sods were piled.

And now 't was o'er, his day of leave,
And back to school he went;
I watered her both morn and eve
With pains most diligent,

Indulging in vast dreams and proud
Of an amazing vine,
Whose branches should be sweetly bowed
With young rag-dolls like mine.



But days went by, and nothing grew,
    And still more days went by,
And I felt sometimes rather blue,
    And half inclined to cry;

Till one day, doubting, yet afraid
    At such disloyal doubt,
I bravely took my little spade
    And dug my dolly out.

Oh, poor!—oh, altered Fuzzidore!
    I thought my heart would break;
I cried one whole great week and more
    For Fuzzidora's sake.

When Ben came home for holidays,
    He bought me *such* a doll!
A Paris blonde, with boots and stays
    And even a parasol.

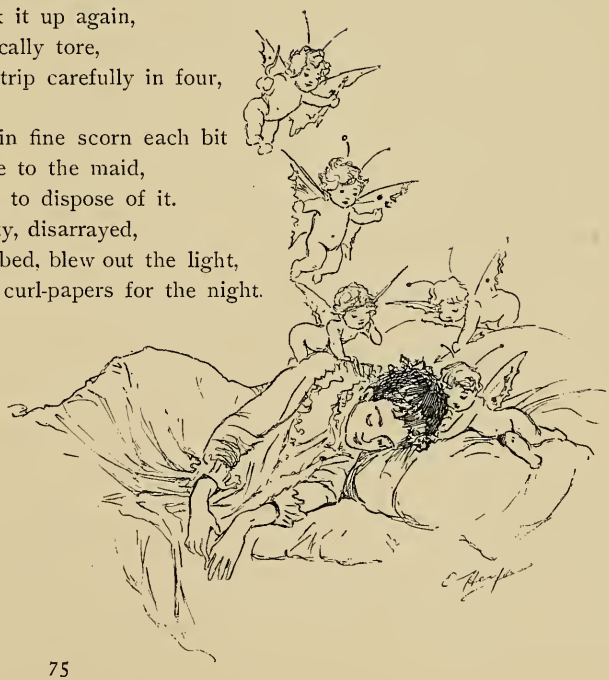
He caught me up, and pinched my ear
    With such a loving touch,
That when he said, "D' you mind much, dear?"
    I answered, "No, — not much."

LES PAPILLOTTES.

EULALIA sat before the glass
While Betty smoothed her hair.
The mirror told her how she was
Attractive, young, and fair;
Curtius was telling her the same
In rosy note, where he confessed his flame.

She read with a satiric eye
Of passion, hope, and pain;
Then, careless, tossed the poor note by;
Then took it up again,
And systematically tore,
And folded each strip carefully in four,

And handed in fine scorn each bit
Of rapture to the maid,
Who wot how to dispose of it.
The beauty, disarrayed,
Now crept in bed, blew out the light,
Her locks in pink curl-papers for the night.



She slept; and with each gentle breath
The paper in her hair
Soft rustled, and, the story saith,
Repeated to the air
Whate'er stood on it fervent thing, —
As if the lover's self were whispering.

And through her dream she heard it say,
The twist o'er her left ear, —
"I vow that I must love alway
The dearest of the dear."
And o'er her forehead spoke a twist,
"That stolen glove I 've kissed and over-kissed."

Said one, "Thou art the loveliest;
Thy beauty I adore."
Another, smaller than the rest,
Sighed, "Love, love," o'er and o'er.
And one said, "Pity my sad plight!"
So Curtius' passion pleaded all the night.

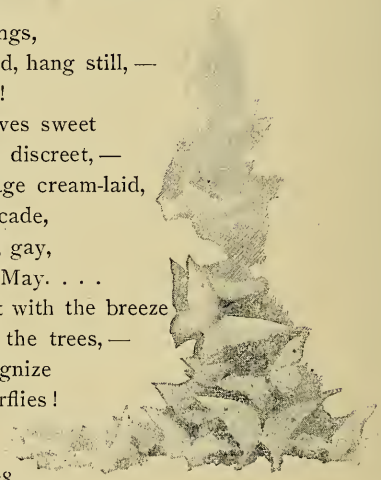
Eulalia waking in the morn,
Large-eyed, sat up in bed,
While vows the tend'rest that be sworn
Still whispered in her head;
A dreamy bliss her soul possessed, —
She rang for Betty; and before she dressed,

Upon a subtly perfumed sheet,
As Curtius' own, blush-pink,
She penned, with crow-quill small and neat,
And perfumed crow-black ink,
In flowing hand right tidily,
The proper, simple message, "Come at three."

VERE NOVO.

[From the French of Victor Hugo.]

HOW smiles the new day on the tearful rose!
Have not the flowers delightful little beaux!
All through the trellis where the jasmine clings,
Oh, what a joyous flurry of white wings,
That come, and go, return, spread, fold, hang still, —
Vibrating with a vast, exquisite thrill!
Oh, Spring! I muse on all the missives sweet
That go from pensive youth to maid discreet, —
Warm heart-throbs written fair on page cream-laid,
Epistles sent from broadcloth to brocade,
Dear lines of love, sad, tender, trivial, gay,
Received in April, and destroyed in May. . . .
And lo! these light, white things that with the breeze
Drift o'er the garden, flutter through the trees, —
These snowy swarms I seem to recognize
As torn love-letters changed to butterflies!



THE LATTER FANCY.

IN former days I did desire
A tawny lion, great and strong,
With eyes of smouldering yellow fire,
And lashing tail extremely long,

A fierce brute, only nice to me,
But me adoring with a mind
Of such unswerving constancy
As I in man could never find.

Poetic visions filled my brain:
We two! he lying at my feet,
Held captive by a slender chain
Of interwoven daisies sweet.

A yellow lion! yes, no doubt;
I cannot see one even yet
Caged, but I wish that he were out,
And mine to play with, mine to pet.

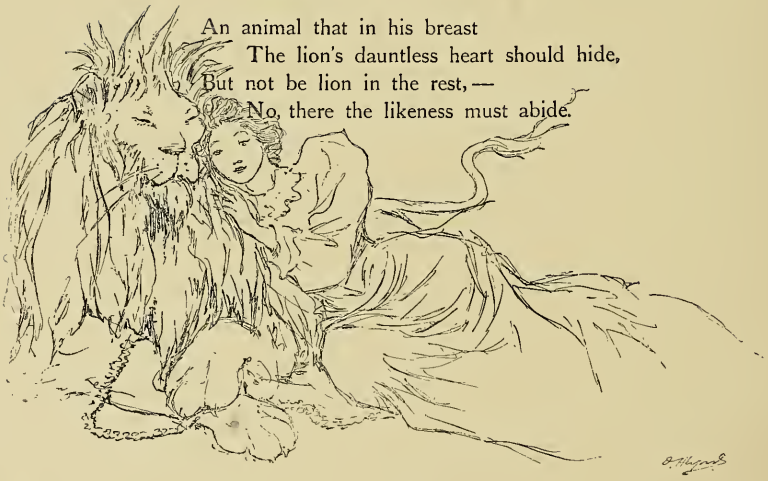
Still, I confess it, points there be
About those splendid claws and teeth
Make me reflect how — possibly —
I 'm better off without than with.

And with this judgment wholesomer
    I had as lief made known to all,
For household pet I should prefer
    To-day a different animal.

Fine as the lion he should be,
    And rather fierce and very strong,
Yet always to be tamed by me,
    With glance perhaps, perhaps with song.

Love should he as the lion should,
    But yet express his fealty
With language better understood,
    Less barbarous civility;

An animal that in his breast
    The lion's dauntless heart should hide,
But not be lion in the rest, —
    No, there the likeness must abide.



FRANGIPANI.

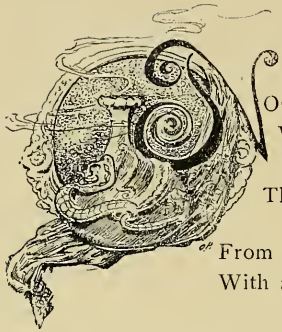
THE closet where an actress
Orders her perfumed curls,
Each black tress
Confining with false pearls;

Then, sober Nature flouting,
In crystal balm-box dips,
And, pouting,
Encrimsons her proud lips.

Across a chair lie trailing
Queen-robes of tinsel gold,
Exhaling
Musk from each garnished fold.

The tribute roses sicken;
With sighs of rose-despair
They thicken
The warm, gas-tainted air.

. . . .



LOOK padded and brocaded,
Whereto the daylight comes
Degraded
Through silken mediums;

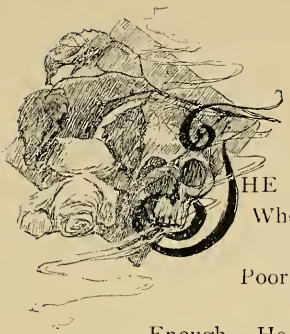
From cup where red devises
With azure monsters quaint
Arises
Thin smoke of subtle scent.

In dreams herself half losing,
A pale great lady lies
Perusing
The latest verse, "Heart Cries;"

Feels at the rhymes' recurring
With morbid, sensuous art,
A stirring
Of her anæmic heart;

Longs for new loves, — loves stranger,
More full of mystery
And danger,
And sweet in due degree,

Than any life could show yet;
Then wonders dreamily,
"This poet, —
What may this poet be?"



THE bare, unlovely attic
Where on her bed a shy,
Erratic,
Poor girl lies down to die.

Enough. He does not love her;
'T is time, then, that the grave
Should cover
What love cared not to save.

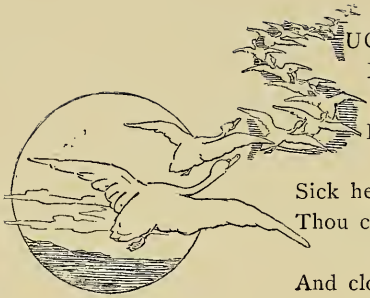
The air grows less — grows warmer;
Against her lips she lays
A former
Gift, sweet in by-gone days.

Air! — air! — a vision hovers
Before her — her dead rose
Recovers
Its perfume of a rose —

Ah, sweeter than all others!
His kiss it is, not death,
So smothers,
So drinks away her breath.

This soft weight, hot as fever,
His mouth, no red rose, is;
So ever
Hot, heavy was his kiss.

. . .

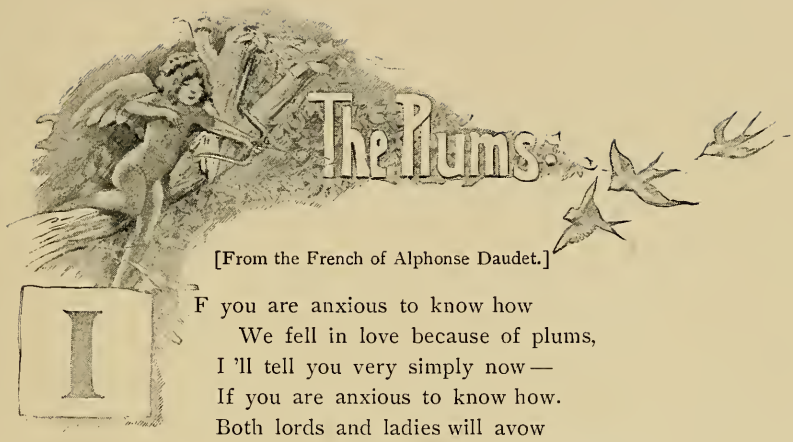


SUCH images, scent subtly
Luxurious, stifling-sweet,
Such motley
Impressions of sick heat,

Sick hearts, thick air rose-blighting,
Thou conjur'st in my brain,
Exciting
And cloying Frangipane.

Till with a mighty longing
I crave the mountain where
Are thronging
Clouds, dews, and cold, pure air;

Great fir-trees wildly shaking
With Aquilon's large mirth,
Dawn breaking,
And good smells of the earth.



The Plums

[From the French of Alphonse Daudet.]

IF you are anxious to know how
We fell in love because of plums,
I 'll tell you very simply now —
If you are anxious to know how.
Both lords and ladies will avow
Love mostly when they 're sleeping comes:
Succinctly, then, I 'll tell you how
We fell in love because of plums.

My uncle had an orchard vast;
I had a cousin, young and fair;
'Twixt us no word of love had passed.
My uncle had an orchard vast;
His cherries being to their taste,
A lot of little birds came there.
My uncle had an orchard vast —
A cousin I, both young and fair.

One morning for a walk we went
    To the orchard, I and Marietta;
So bright, so fresh, so innocent,
One morning for a walk we went.
The crickets, all in high content,
    Were practising an *arietta;*
One morning for a walk we went
    In the orchard, I and Marietta.

On every side, now loud, now low,
    The birds were singing in the bowers;
In flats and sharps, in *la* and *do*,
On every side, now loud, now low.
The fields were covered as with snow
    With myriad little snowy flowers;
On every side, now loud, now low,
    The birds were singing in the bowers.

So charming in her dainty frock,
    So kind, and not at all flirtatious,
My cousin chatted like a clock, —
So dainty in her charming frock.
Even as a feathered shuttlecock
    She came and went, alert, vivacious, —
So charming in her dainty frock,
    Benign, but not at all flirtatious.

Having reached the orchard wall,
My cousin eyes the plums' ripe splendor;
The greedy girl wants one or all,
Having reached the orchard wall.
She shakes the tree, and makes one fall;
It lies there bloomy, tempting, tender.
Having reached the orchard wall,
My cousin eyes the plums' ripe splendor.

She picks it up, and takes a bite,
Then hands it me — oh, privilege!
My heart went so my head felt light:
She picks it up, and takes a bite;
Her tiny teeth, so fine and white,
Had made a little scalloped edge.
She picks it up, and takes a bite,
And bids me taste — oh, privilege!

It was not much, but 't was enow;
What worlds it meant, that plum alone!
(If I had known then what I know!)
It was not much, but 't was enow.
Just where the pretty prints did show
I bit the plum — I 've kept the stone.
It was not much, but 't was enow;
How much it told, that plum alone!

TO THE READER.

Yes, dearest reader, that is how
We loved by reason of a plum.
Pray, don't misunderstand us now;
Indeed, good reader, that is how.
But if one lifts a sceptic brow,
And snaps a rude, derisive thumb,
The worse for him! for that *is* how
We loved by reason of a plum.

Veritas.

THEE will I sing, crystal half-bubble, thee,
Crowned with the wine through whose clear, chilly gold
The silver atoms rise, — rise restlessly;
The hand last night about thy frail stem rolled
Is loved by me.

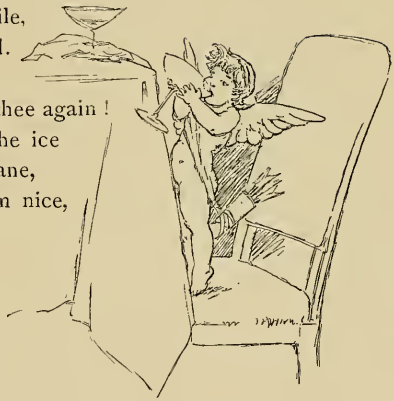
We sat by one another. I could gaze
Unchidden on what seems to me most fair:
Her eyes, the gray of cloudy Sabbath days, —
The wondrous carven bog-wood of her hair,
Her marble face.

But not a kind word nor a smile won I
From her sweet mouth, angelically cold;
Whate'er I said politely was set by:
"Man's old, dull tale, to every woman told, —
The usual lie."

So fared we through the *entrées* and the roast.
I half heard, through a haze of dull despair,
The guests' light laugh, the stories of our host;
Half saw the lights, the flowers, the shoulders bare, —
All seemed pains lost.

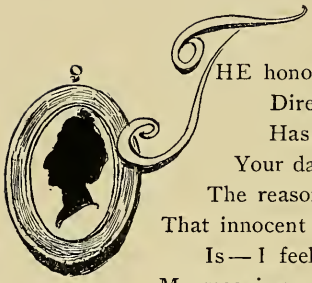
But now the napkined bottle! Soft and slow
Into thee, shallow glass, poured the adept.
Indiff'rent I looked on; I could not know
How in thy gleaming depths the kind word slept,
The smile also.

She raised thee to her lips, serenely drained,
Talked of the flower-show still a little while;
The pure blood then her pure cheek purely stained;
Kindly she spoke to me, gave me a smile,
Frank, sweet, unfeigned.



I thank thee, crystal thing, — thank thee again!
T was thine with magic glow to melt the ice
Thin as the frost upon a window-pane,
And let through cold convention, custom nice,
Her heart be plain.

THE DANCING-MASTER'S FAREWELL.



THE honored lady, Madam Strictenstern,
Directress of this noble seminary,
Has signified in terms succinct — oh, very —
Your dance-steps need no more be my concern.
The reason for this sudden, sharp suppressing
That innocent diversion from your books,
Is — I feel some embarrassment expressing
My meaning — is — young ladies — my good looks.

"When putting on my pumps one hour gone by
To seek this field of honorable action,
I little thought they could be a detraction,
My faultless nose, my large and languid eye!
But criticising aught would ill befit me
That Madame urged, and — yes, I understand! —
And so am come to kiss — if you 'll permit me —
The seminary's — figurative — hand.

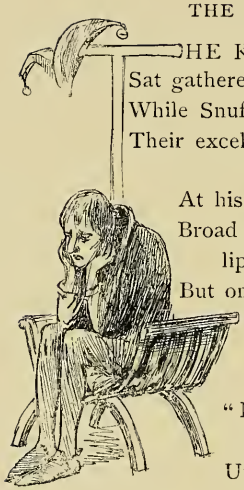
"No more now in the mazes of the *valse*
May we meet, nor across the lively Lancers;
No more may I advise my docile dancers
With, 'This is doubtful art,' 'That *pas* is false.'
But something whispers to an injured feeling
The memory of me shall live on yet
(And precious is the thought, and full of healing)
In each hereafter perfect pirouette!

"But even now stands one upon the stair
Who in my place — for the same moderate stipend —
Will guide your footsteps, and whose judgment ripened
Is well attested by his thinning hair;
Whilst I — far, far away (what grief within stirs!
Miss Blanche, Miss Rose, I beg you will not cry!)
Shall teach to unimpressionable spinsters
The minuet — Mesdemoiselles — good-by!"

FROM THE GERMAN.

I.

THE COURT FOOL.



THE King and many a jovial lord
Sat gathered round the festive board,
While Snuff, the court fool, scatter-brained,
Their excellencies entertained.

At his swift sallies, pranks, and quips,
Broad laughter strained their easeful lips;
But one guest sat in study brown,
With dull, grave eyes still looking down.

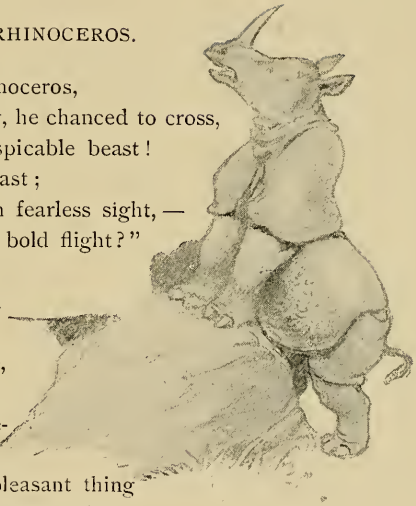
"Now, prithee," quoth Sir Silver-scarf
Unto the King, "what ails that dwarf?
When we with mirth are overcome,
Why doth he sit so stiff and glum?"

"This is the point," replied the King,
"That is my other jester, Sting;
And this is his half-holiday
He may enjoy in his own way."

II.

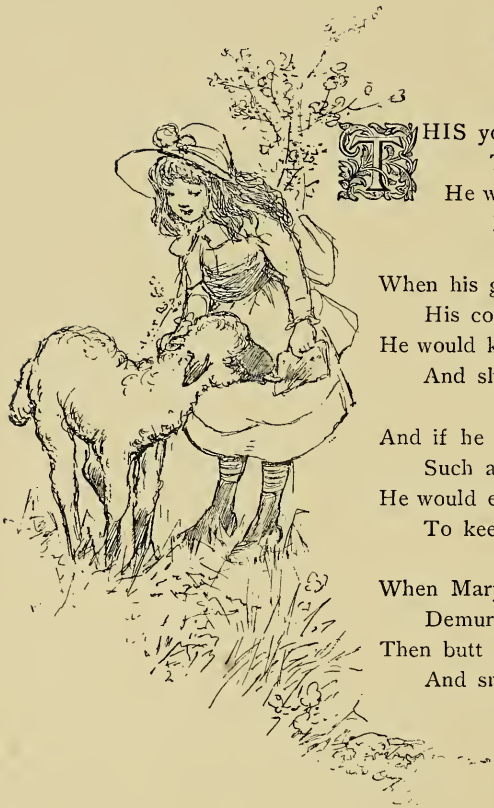
THE EAGLE AND THE RHINOCEROS.

THE eagle said to the rhinoceros,
Whom, foraging one day, he chanced to cross,
"Indeed, thou art a despicable beast!
Of poesy in thee is not the least;
Whilst I, who fix the sun with fearless sight, —
What poet envies not me my bold flight?"



Then the rhinoceros, in placid tone,
Spoke: "Poets envy not thee, bird, alone;
When his bold flights as consequences bring
Full many a pointed, free, unpleasant thing
From critics, in his gallèd, writhing pride,
What poet envies not me my thick hide?"

A Woolly Lamb.



THIS young lamb was not in the least
The lamb they represent;
He was a wicked little beast,
Not mild nor innocent.

When his grieved dam with long appeals
His conscience would assail,
He would kick up his naughty heels,
And shake his woolly tail.

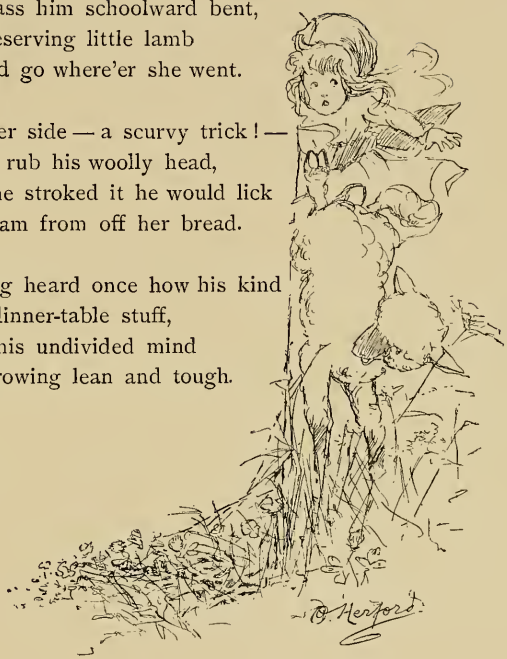
And if he found some toothsome weed
Such as the flock love best,
He would eat thrice what he did need
To keep it from the rest.

When Mary her white pet would call,
Demurely he 'd draw nigh, —
Then butt her, just to see her fall,
And smile to hear her cry.

But if she chanced with bread and jam
    To pass him schoolward bent,
This undeserving little lamb
    Would go where'er she went.

Against her side — a scurvy trick! —
    He 'd rub his woolly head,
And as she stroked it he would lick
    The jam from off her bread.

Till, having heard once how his kind
    Are dinner-table stuff,
He gave his undivided mind
    To growing lean and tough.



The Weather

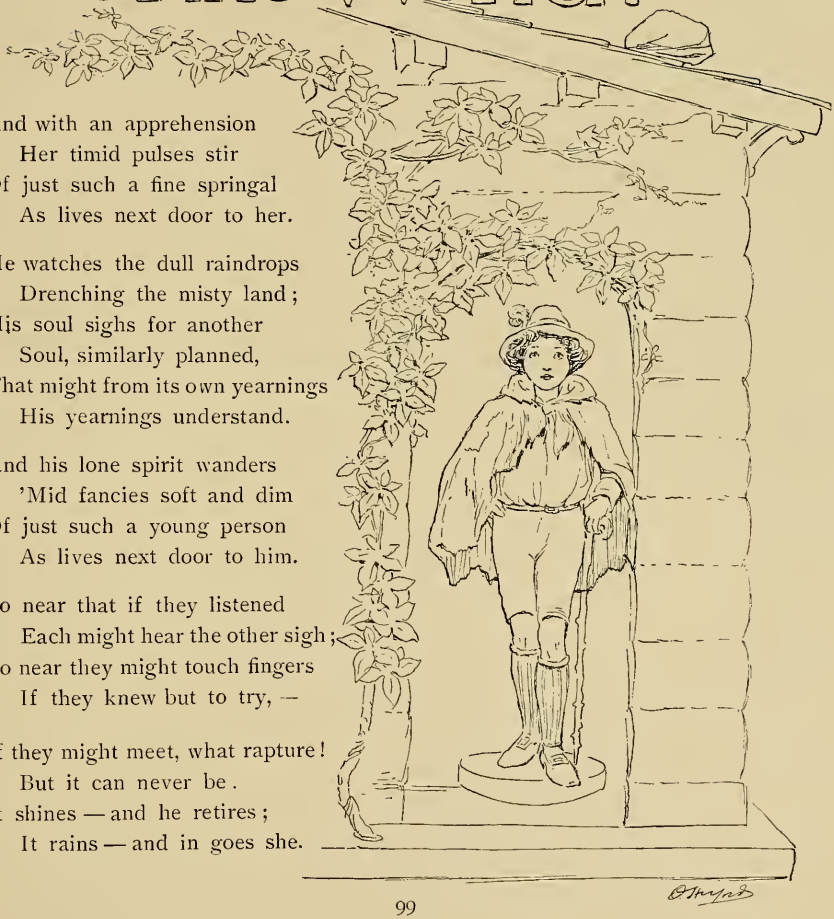
CRIMSON-KIRTLED maiden,
With braided flaxen hair,
Stands in her little doorway
Whenever it is fair.

Whenever it is rainy,
A pretty lad in blue
Comes to his little threshold,
As if to note the view.

Whenever it is rainy,
She hastes with curious care
To hide herself, — as he does
Whenever it is fair.

She looks upon the sunlight
With melancholy eyes,
And thinks, "If there were some one
About my style and size
With whom I could at all times
Entirely sympathize!"

of the World.



And with an apprehension
Her timid pulses stir
Of just such a fine springal
As lives next door to her.

He watches the dull raindrops
Drenching the misty land;
His soul sighs for another
Soul, similarly planned,
That might from its own yearnings
His yearnings understand.

And his lone spirit wanders
'Mid fancies soft and dim
Of just such a young person
As lives next door to him.

So near that if they listened
Each might hear the other sigh;
So near they might touch fingers
If they knew but to try, —

If they might meet, what rapture!
But it can never be.
It shines — and he retires;
It rains — and in goes she.

FOR THE SAFETY OF THE PUBLIC.

[Caldwell pinxit.]

UM finks vat I 'm a drangerous droggie;
Well, ven, perhaps I be.
Um 's fixded wiv big strap and bucknell
My daddy's muzzle on me.

Perhaps it 's best; for I 'm a fierce un.
I got big toofs just come;
And when um pulls my welvet earses,
I twist, — and bite um fum.

Miss Dolly come into my kennel,
And kiss me half to defs;
She crush me to her girl-face, laughing,
To 'mell my puppy brefs.

She call me "lamb," and "fweetness doggums,"
"Dear man," and "angel beast;"
She cratch my tum, which do seem daring, —
Or rather free, at least.

For I 'm a big, blug-fusty droggie;
    Um 's had to muzzle me up;
Um only take vis muzzle off me
    When time am milks to sup.

But I do wish, now no one looking,
    Yet help am wivin hail,
I might get black nose out of muzzle, —
    I wants to play wiv tail.

FRANKLIN SQUARE.

THERE is a garden in mid-city,
With rounds and squares of green;
When May days make it almost pretty,
There, punctual as a church committee,
The nursery maids convene.

Comes dusk Aunt Dinah with the baby,
Soft thing of fluff and lace;
Comes Mammy Prissy, proud as may be
When "frien's call her chile mon'sous hebby
For nine monfs, 'lebben days."

Wheeling the twins, there 's Mademoiselle,
In a French fluttering cap;
There 's Biddy, with the child who fell,
And since that day is never well,
Safe on her kind, broad lap.

And there 's the young thing "Rosy" named,
Who cries to charge aged two,
The sturdy villain unreclaimed,
Who scorns to mind, "Ain't you ashamed,
A great big boy like you!"

And budding swarms with flowing rings,
In little kilts and vests,
In tiny frocks and leading-strings,
That toddle 'mid the budding things,
And make a noise like nests.

To my green settle I repair,
And watch the tender train.
I hear one, — "What 's he doing there,
The old gray fellow with the stare,
Sucking his gold-topped cane?"

Nay — nothing. Nay, — proceed, my dear,
With rosy play and strife, —
A poet's words ring in my ear:
Oh, spring, spring, youth-tide of the year!
Oh, youth, spring-tide of life!

The Giant and The Butterfly.

THERE lived a giant; and he was so big
That had there been upon his forehead fair
A mole, and on that mole a hair, that hair
Would have appeared a twig.
The rest in due proportion; but his mind
(By thoughtful disposition of the gods,
Who saw how man had been at fearful odds
Else with one of his kind)

Was not more than the man's whom with his thumb
He might, if he felt vicious, lightly slay,

And had as much room in his skull as, say,
A pea has in a drum.
He was a great, good-natured, blundering fellow,
Who ne'er had spent a long breath in a sigh —
Until one day there came a butterfly,
All dusty brown and yellow.

It flashed about his heavy, wondering eyes;
He held his hand out for the wingèd treasure.
It lit there, *debonnair*, pleased with his pleasure
In all its pretty dyes,
One second, but ere the other hand was ready,
Flew with a flutter like malicious laughter
Beyond his grasp; and, sighing, he gazed after
The saucy little lady.

Then she returned; evading his strong hand,
Wheeled all about his mild, gigantic head,
And with a small, soft wing, just touched with red,
His fond lip faintly fanned.
She brushed his gnarlèd, massy locks for him,
She settled for an instant on his nose,
Then in the sunny air so high arose
His straining eyes grew dim.

"Here!" cried the giant, stamping in a pet,
"Come here, you little gauzy thing, I say!
I am a giant, I must have my way, —
None dared defy me yet."

The butterfly looked down on the great lout,
And — in a playful mood, we must suppose —
Placed one slight thumb against her little nose,
And spread her fingers out.

Unwary fly! for, in her rage to tease,
See how she comes too near him she would flout,
Who, blind with baffled longing, stretches out
Rough fingers, mad to seize
That painted dust, so frail, yet so defiant —

. . . . .

Upon his hand some faint gold atoms lie —
And where is it, the golden butterfly?
And where, too, — is the giant?

TO MY OLD WATCH.

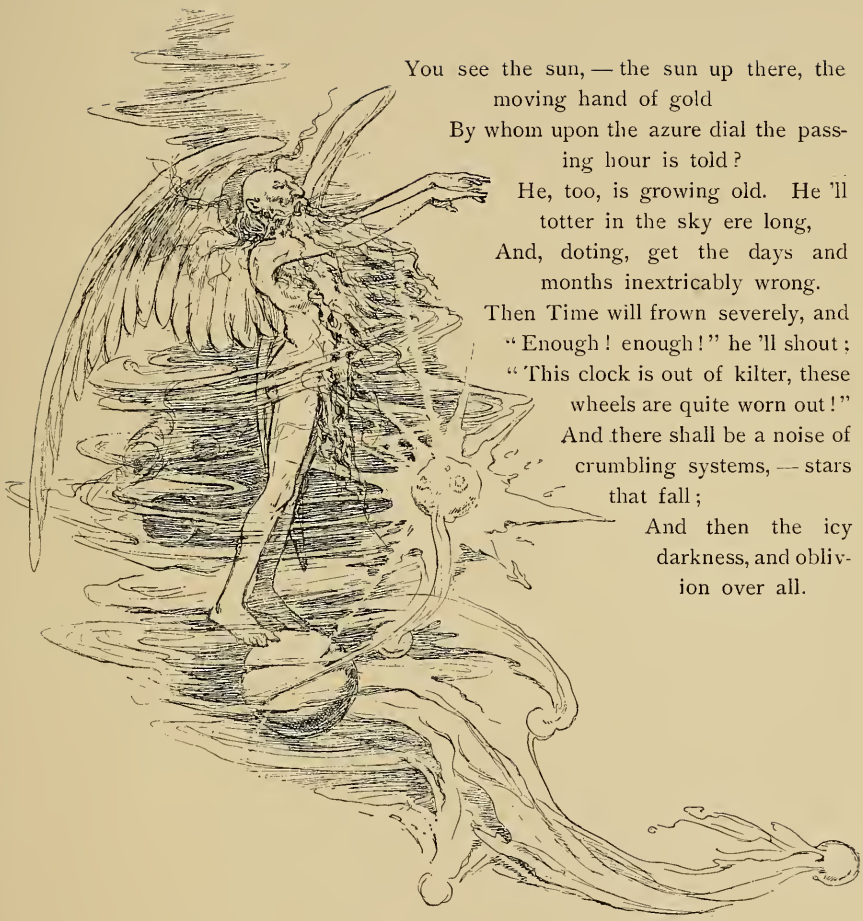
[From the Italian of D. Gnoli.]

IN vain, old friend, I take you up and shake, and try to mend.
In vain I hold you to my ear. No use! you 've stopped, old friend.
Unto a very thankless lord your services were lent:
You measured Time, — and he your life, with ruthless measurement.
Your doctor told me so: "He 's broken down, his teeth are bad;
Against the fell effect of years no help is to be had."
Now many a day, you know, old man, a random race you 've run,
Confounding dusk and dawn, ignoring laws of star and sun;

But I bore with your age, and e'en no serious fault would find
When you stood still for several hours, as if to get your wind.
Through you, I 've got there early in a hot, dishevelled state, —
"No matter," have I said; "here 's a Havanna while I wait."
Through you, I 've got there late; and though reproaches were not few,
I 've lowered my devoted head—and laid no blame on you.
Through you, the whistle of the fast-receding train I 've heard;
On which occasions, you will own, I 've scarcely said a word.
Now Time has slain you, — Time, your master; Time, our common foe;
Old Time, who lives upon the dead, — a dreary carrion crow!

Within a certain casket's shade, gloom perfumed and discreet,
Have I a little burial-ground of trifles dear and sweet;
A broken plaything, letters, bits of ribbon, too, are there,
And dark remains of faded flowers, and fading locks of hair.
There shall you rest, old friend; and when I lift the casket's lid,
I shall imagine that I hear you tick as once you did,
Enlivening the lonesome, studious watches of the night,

Lightsome and young, against a heart then young as well, and light.
And you shall wake that still world with your former clear tick-tack:
Up, up, you dead, for I 've made the complacent years turn back!
I mark the hours of happy days that some had fancied dead.
Return, O dusky ring, to wave upon its lovely head!
Once more, O blackening rose, be red within a garden gay!
O broken toy, be whole! a little child desires to play.
Nay, Time has slain you, — Time, your master; Time, our common foe,
Who feeds upon the dead, — a dreary, darkling, carrion crow!
But let no jealous grudge toward the new heir your slumbers break;
Already do I hate the stranger watch your place shall take.
You told the blissful morning hours of youth and love and hope;
And he must count the heavy steps adown the sunset slope.
Resigned, lie in your grave. Fate deals alike with all, old friend;
And being born is just the first step leading to the end.



You see the sun, — the sun up there, the moving hand of gold
By whom upon the azure dial the passing hour is told?
He, too, is growing old. He 'll totter in the sky ere long,
And, doting, get the days and months inextricably wrong.
Then Time will frown severely, and "Enough! enough!" he 'll shout;
"This clock is out of kilter, these wheels are quite worn out!"
And there shall be a noise of crumbling systems, — stars that fall;
And then the icy darkness, and oblivion over all.

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